

What makes ticks tick?

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Did you know that ticks can still be active in temperatures as low as 40 degrees?

This was one of the facts conveyed to beachgoers by Duxbury Board of Health intern Melissa Silverman during her presentation at Duxbury Beach on Monday. Silverman is currently enrolled in an internship program through the State Health Department and has been working alongside the Town of Duxbury to engage locals about tick awareness and the varying degrees of tick prevention.

After delivering her presentation at the Duxbury Senior Center, the Duxbury Free Library and Camp Wing, among other locations, Silverman decided to spread the word at Duxbury Beach. "It's been a wonderful turnout here," Silverman said. "On average I've been speaking with two dozen people here on the beach. Residents are very aware that ticks are a problem in our area, but my job is to try and teach them prevention measures." Some of the items highlighted on her poster boards included types of repellents, what ticks look like, where they live and the types of things people can do to prevent ticks in their own home.

"The most important thing is maintaining consistency in your tick prevention," Silverman said. "My goal is for people to be engaged in the topic and that way they can go home and research it further."

There were a variety of topics available for Silverman to study for the internship program, but the Board of Health placed an emphasis on tick awareness citing the high incidence rates in Plymouth County and the East Coast at large.

A recent study conducted by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health listed Plymouth County as having the third-highest combined incidence rate for confirmed and probable cases of Lyme disease in the state in 2014. Nantucket County and Dukes County held the top two spots, respectively, in the unenviable category.

Doubling as a registered nurse and a local health intern, Silverman had a base knowledge of the disease-carrying parasites before delving deeper into the subject matter.

"I think that doctors and medical professionals are your best educational resources in the community because they can answer more specific questions about your risk factors and things that you should be doing for tick prevention," Silverman said.

The work will continue even after the internship is done as Silverman has applied for a grant through South Shore Community Prevention in hopes of securing additional funds to disperse even more information out to the public.



Duxbury Board of Health intern Melissa Silverman sits next to her table of tick facts.



Silverman gives a presentation on tick prevention at Duxbury Beach.

Photos by Aaron Carr